

THE TEXAS NAACP REMEMBERS SHEILA JACKSON LEE

Today our nation lost one of its most outstanding leaders, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee.

We send our prayers and condolences to her family. While we mourn her loss, we also celebrate her life and accomplishments. Congresswoman Jackson Lee was a true champion for justice. She served in the United States House of Representatives for 30 years and always displayed an unmitigated commitment to serve all of us, but particularly the least of us and the disenfranchised. As a congresswoman, she had many accomplishments, including leading the effort to get Juneteenth recognized as a national holiday. With her booming, inspirational voice, Congresswoman Jackson Lee spoke truth to power in Texas and Washington, D.C., and kept her hand on the pulse of Texas' Afri-

can-American population.

She took to heart the historical nature of the 18th Congressional District and her beloved 3rd Ward and did all she could to keep it intact during contentious redistricting battles, and in so doing, honoring one of her mentors, the late Congresswoman Barbara Jordan. She testified time and again about the repeated attempts every decade to diminish the voting power of African-Americans and others in the 18th Congressional District.

Just this year, the congresswoman, serving as senior member of the House Committee on the Judiciary, reintroduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. Congresswoman Jackson Lee also was a leader in the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. She also was a member of the House Committee of

Homeland Security. Throughout her career, she championed immigrant rights and pushed back against those who tried to vilify people seeking a better life and DACA recipients. As the Ranking Member of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Maritime and Border Security where she co-authored a bipartisan bill designed to lead to comprehensive immigration reform.

Congresswoman Jackson Lee was a conscience in the Congress, moving legislation forward to study deserved reparations for persons of African descent who are descendants of formerly enslaved persons in our country. She stood up for historically black colleges and universities and was a frequent guest and popular speaker on the Texas Southern University campus.

Sonya Massey's father says family was 'mised' about her death and 'never told' she was shot by police

by Maiysha Kai | THE GRIO

(CRIME) - James Wilburn, the father of Sonya Massey, says recently released body cam footage of his daughter's fatal shooting by police is "probably the most horrible, heart-wrenching thing that [our family has] ever seen in our lives." Nevertheless, he is thankful it exists.

"If it were not for the body cam footage, we would not have known that this occurred," Wilburn told "CBS Mornings" host Gayle King as he sat alongside family attorney Ben Crump on Wednesday.

As previously reported by theGrio, on July 6, Massey, a 36-year-old Black woman and mother of two teen children, was shot and killed by a sheriff's deputy in her Springfield, Illinois, home after calling 911, fearing that a prowler was at her residence. Confirmed by her family to have previously been diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia, Massey told the two officers arriving on the scene she had "taken [her] medicine," and was following instructions to move a pot of water boiling on her stove when she was shot three times by Sangamon County Sheriff's Deputy Sean Grayson.

Now dismissed from the force, Grayson is charged with first-degree murder, aggravated battery with a firearm and official misconduct. It has also been revealed the officer shuffled between six different law enforcement agencies over the past four years. While the disgraced officer claimed Massey "came at [him] with boiling water," court documents filed by prosecutors characterized her as "calm, possibly unwell, and non-aggressive" during the interaction.

Wilburn said he and Massey's family were not



'If it were not for the body cam footage, we would not have known that this occurred,' said James Wilburn, father of slain Illinois woman Sonya Massey.

Screenshot: (Left to right) Gayle King, James Wilburn and Ben Crump (CBS News/YouTube)

initially told her death was the result of a police shooting.

"I was never told that it was a deputy-involved shooting. We were under the impression that she was killed by the intruder, or some other person from the street, and they just went in there and found her dead body," Wilburn told King, later noting there were even rumored suggestions that his daughter's injuries were self-inflicted.

With the public release of body cam footage by Illinois State Police on Monday, a clearer picture of Massey's final moments emerged, including a tense verbal exchange in which she tells deputies, "I rebuke you in the name of Jesus," while complying with their demands. She is also heard apologizing to Grayson as he aims his weapon at her, just seconds before he approaches her and follows through on a verbal threat to "shoot [her] in the face."

"I think that she feared for her life," said Wilburn when asked to explain what his daughter might have meant by her rebuke. "There was something, some premonition that she had...It's just un-

explainable."

Also inexplicable is why Grayson did not turn on his recording apparatus until after the shooting; the footage was recovered from the other deputy's body cam.

In a statement issued Tuesday, President Joe Biden offered a rebuke of his own, saying in part:

"Sonya Massey, a beloved mother, friend, daughter, and young Black woman, should be alive today... When we call for help, all of us as Americans – regardless of who we are or where we live – should be able to do so without fearing for our lives.

"Sonya's death at the hands of a responding officer reminds us that all too often Black Americans face fears for their safety in ways many of the rest of us do not," he added, advocating for the long-delayed passage of the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act.

Massey family attorney Crump had a harsher message as he held a press conference Monday: "Until we get justice for Sonya Massey, we rebuke this discriminatory justice system in the name of Jesus."

Vanessa Williams says she felt 'pressure, shame, judgment' after Miss America nude photo scandal

by Mariel Turner | THE GRIO

(ENTERTAINMENT) - Vanessa Williams is opening up about her past, present, and future in a new interview with People.

The actress reflected on her 1984 Miss America win and 10-month reign, which was cut short when nude photos she had taken years before were leaked to the press. Williams, who was the first Black woman to win the pageant, was only 21 when she found out the photos were sold and would be published in Penthouse magazine, according to People.

The scandal dominated the news cycle for weeks and hurt Williams' image and career at the time.

"There was a tremendous amount of onus, pressure, shame, judgment," she says about the scandal. "Had there been an internet to break back then, it would have shattered to pieces. I took all that on as a 21-year-old. It was global. You can fail quietly, but that was a worldwide fail."

Williams was only 19 and working as a receptionist at a New York modeling agency when she took the photos in 1982, People reported. She was told at the time she'd "appear only in silhouette."

Williams says that she looks back on her "19- to 20-year-old self" and thinks, "Oh my God you were so naive, so trusting, so vulnerable."

"In your mind you think, 'I'm old, I know what



"Had there been an internet to break back then, it would have shattered to pieces," Williams says. Vanessa Williams attends "The Cottage" Broadway Opening Night at Hayes Theater on July 24, 2023, in New York City. (Photo by Cindy Ord/Getty Images)

I'm doing.' I give myself grace now, but as a young adult, I beat myself up, like 'I should have known better,'" Williams shares.

The actress says her family helped her get through the experience and she now talks to her four adult children about that time.

"They're all older than I was now, but the fact that I became famous at 20 years old relative to their lives and having death threats and having to go through breaking a huge hurdle and what the repercussions of that was," she says. "[They're like] 'Wow, how did you handle all this mom at 20?' Then I look back at my 20-year-old self and say, 'My God, I was a baby.'"

Now 61, Williams has built a legendary career

in Hollywood, for which she is grateful. The actress has starred in hit shows and films like "Ugly Betty," "Soul Food," and "Desperate Housewives." Next up, she will appear as Miranda Priestly in London's upcoming musical adaptation of the 2006 film "The Devil Wears Prada."

"I'm still here and I'm still standing. I'm still feeling strong," Williams says. "To create a role in a new musical has been one of my dreams."

Williams also revealed that she is newly divorced, planning to release her first album in 15 years, working on a new reality show, and developing a new documentary about her life.

"I'm doing what I love, and I'm in love with life," she adds.